

THE
SAINTS VICTORY
OVER
Death.

A SERMON.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.



The Saints Victory over Death.

A

SERMON

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR ROBERT TISHBOURN, *K*

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON,

AND

REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT IN THE YEAR 1657.

Now Re-published,

DEDICATED TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

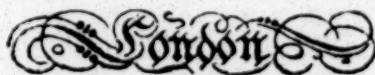
SIR WILLIAM STAINES,

LORD MAYOR OF LONDON;

BY

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR WILLIAM STAINES,
Lord Mayor of London.

MY LORD,

WITH real pleasure I join with your fellow-citizens, in congratulating your Lordship on your inauguration into office, as first Magistrate of the City of London—My earnest wish is, that your Lordship may be blest with health and strength of body, with wisdom and fortitude of mind, to discharge the important duties of your station, with honour and dignity to yourself, and with the approbation of all good men.

Some time ago a curious and inestimable Jewel fell into my hands, externally tarnished and defaced by the rude hand of

time, but internally of more intrinsic value than all the diadems in the universe, the riches of the east, or the mines of Peru: for the ravages of time will produce wonderful changes among all these, and finally consume them in the general wreck of worlds: but the subject matter of this will shine with divine lustre through eternity. I allude to a volume of judicious SERMONS, happily suited to the various conditions of real Christians, of every denomination, in that age, as well as the present, and will be while there is a Church in the world.

The singularity of their being composed and published by a Lord Mayor of London, and a Representative in Parliament, in the year 1657, during his Mayoralty, excited my attention; and on the most serious perusal, I found they well deserved the approbation with which they were then honoured. It appears a second edition of them was published, with the addition of a Treatise on Faith, in the same year.

The doctrines they contain are purely evangelical and experimental, which shews his Lordship had a clear judgment in religious matters, and a heart influenced by grace. It is evident by the composition, they were written with a view of doing good to plain and pious Christians, and not to gain applause of the learned, the wise, or the great. One of these sermons I have selected, entitled "THE SAINTS VICTORY OVER DEATH." It is full of consolation to the tried Christian, and the subject highly important: it concerns the whole human race in their most essential interests, and is a rare phenomenon to the curious, as flowing from such a source.

To preserve this relic from oblivion, and render it useful to the present age, I have ventured (after a dormancy of near two hundred years) to launch a third edition of it into the world, under your Lordship's protection; for I judged you, my Lord, to be the most proper Patron of so valuable a

tract, as it had its birth from your Lordship's chair.

That this Sermon may be of real use to the Church of God, to influence and ripen the minds of men of all ranks, to meditate on the solemn subject of Death; and that it may prove as beneficial and consolatory to your Lordship in the perusal, as it certainly appears to have been to the honourable and pious Author in the composing, is the prayer of,

My Lord,

your Lordship's

obedient servant in the Gospel,

JOHN DUNCAN,

*No. 1, Palace Street,
Buckingham Gate.*

Nov. 17, 1800.

SERMON.

1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING! O GRAVE,
WHERE IS THY VICTORY!

THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN, AND THE
STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW:

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US
THE VICTORY, THROUGH OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST.

THE subject matter of this whole chapter is Death, and the Resurrection from the Dead. The general scope of these three verses is death, and that under a two-fold consideration: death in its strength, with its sting, and death bereaved of its sting, victoriously conquered. Death is a subject that concerns all men, for it puts a period to all flesh; it is a very weighty subject, and is worthy of our most serious consideration: for our bodies are but clay walls, and prisons to our immortal souls; such frail buildings death shall certainly break through, and they must lie in the grave till crumbled to dust, from whence they were taken. But the weight of death lies chiefly in the sting of death, which is sin, and the

strength of sin, which is the law ; under these considerations the apostle takes it here, and in verse 55, puts a holy triumphing question, *O death where is thy sting?* Not that he was ignorant what was the sting of death, for in the very next verse he tells us what the sting of death is, and the strength of that sting. He asks the question to let death know that in the free grace of God through Jesus Christ he had the victory over it ; as if he had said, “ Death, I know that sin is thy sting, and the law is the strength of it ; but this I know by the Spirit of God, that Christ hath borne my sins, fulfilled the law, and satisfied divine justice for my soul ; therefore, death, thou hast no sting in thee for me ; Christ hath taken thy sting from thee. *Thanks be to God, which giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ.* I can put this question to thee, *O death ! where is thy sting ?*” Death shall certainly sit in the bosom, look in the face, and close the eyes of all flesh : but whether, in this juncture, death appears a friend or an enemy, whether with or without his sting, this is the main point to be enquired after. To be resolved in this, the soul must look up to Christ and behold death first in him.

To be more explanatory upon this weighty subject, I shall make some particular observations from the words.

First, That union with Christ gives death to sin.—Secondly, Christ's death gives satisfaction to the law—and Thirdly, Christ's resurrection is victory over death.

The apostle acknowledges that sin is the sting of death, and that the law is the strength of sin; nevertheless he blesseth God for victory over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ: that which giveth the victory over death must be the death of sin, and the satisfaction of the law, and that is, saith the text, *our Lord Jesus Christ*; union with, propriety and interest in him. Christ, by dying for his elect body, did not only save them from their sins, in being made sin for them, and redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, but did thereby give us victory over death. Christ, by taking away sin, bereaves death of his sting; by which the Lord conquers death for all that have union with and interest in him; so that through Christ, who loved us, we are conquerors over it. He overcomes sin and death by dying; he dies for his people, and his conquest over death is for them for whom he died; so that a believing soul, looking upon death through Christ, doth triumph, as the apostle here doth: *O death! where is thy sting?*—and with Christ, reigns over death, as an enemy destroyed and put under his feet. The believing soul, in its

union with Christ, is above death, as Christ is above it. The bodies of saints shall sleep for a time in the grave; but death, being without its sting, is but a servant, to put God's children to bed for a time; till corruption shall have put on incorruption, and mortality shall have put on immortality; and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.

The second observation is this. That such as die not in union with Christ, die through the sting and victory of death.

The terror of death cometh only in the sting; when the sting appears in death, then, and then only, hath it a dreadful countenance. It is sin that puts terror into death; but when the sting of sin was taken away, the apostle could glory over death: but to Christless souls death comes in its full power. It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment. Now to a Christless soul, death and sin appear together, - and the sting of death, which is sin, will go along with the soul to judgment. This makes death to be dreadful to such poor souls; and here death is not a servant, to lay the body to sleep, but a jailor, to bring soul and body in sin before the Just and Righteous Judge. To a soul out of Christ, it is death to think of appearing before a righteous and holy God; but when

death comes, and the soul must certainly appear before his tribunal, this is death indeed—a thousand deaths in one. To such a soul it is death to live; because the sentence will be, Go ye cursed: this shall be your curse, ye shall live for ever out of the presence and glorious enjoyment of the everliving, holy and glorious God. *The sting of death is sin.* Where death and sin meet in one soul, there death stings that poor soul to death, and then it is the king of terrors, because it hath its sting; and there sin hath its strength (the law of God) to accuse, and the curse of that law to condemn to all eternity. Thus is death in full strength to Christless souls.

I do not intend, in this discourse, to take in all the parts of this subject; nor shall I, in this place, take into consideration how Christ hath delivered his people from sin, and the curse of the law, though both are contained in this text, because I have done it in another sermon lately. I shall take that for granted, and confine my present views to that which I judge to be the chief thing in the apostle's view in the text, which is namely this:

The glory and excellency of saints, as they are made to glory in and triumph over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

First. A saint through Christ may glory over death in the very nature of it. Death

here is no death; the sting being taken away, it hath, as it were, lost its nature; it is changed, it is not what it was at first. It is the nature of death to devour and destroy; that appears by the sting, which is sin; but, through Christ, death is bereaved of this power: having lost its sting, instead of a destroyer, it becomes a servant, not only to God, but to saints also. Death is, through Christ, a servant to all saints, to wait on them till they have finished their work on earth, according to the will of God, and then lay them to rest in the dust. It waits till all the work is done, and then it works in the appointment of God; resting the weary body from its labours, breaking down the clay walls, that the longing soul may meet its Beloved in perfection of glory, never to part more, but to be for ever with the Lord; to behold the everlasting love of God in glory, and be for ever swallowed up in the glory of that love.

Death, which in itself is grim and frightful, is, through Christ, to a saint welcome and pleasing, because it comes without a sting, and hath no other business but to answer God's design, in setting the soul free from the body of death, and the body from a weary and toilsome life. Death is but a sleep, in which the body lies, 'till, at the glorious ap-

pearance of Christ, it riseth incorruptible. The nature of death, through Christ, is only our Father's messenger to bring us home, that we may see his reconciled face in glory, and enjoy the mansions prepared for us; that we may taste the love of his heart, know him as we shall then, reap the full harvest of all our hopes, possessing glory above the life of faith. Our feasting in heaven will be fruitions; not a crown of glory in promise only, but in possession. The joys, the hopes, the desires of a gracious soul in our life, is by death brought in at once; the joy of this soul is that the day draws nigh in which the body shall be dissolved, and it shall be with Christ; it hopes to meet its Beloved in perfect glory, and never part more; it desires to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Death, with its sting, kills where it conquers; but death, without its sting, only changes the body of saints from worms to cold clay: so Job waited all the days of his appointed time till his change should come. By death saints change their place, but not their company; whereas before they lived in God, now they live with God. Saints on earth have communion with God and Christ in the spirit, and saints in heaven have the same company, but in greater glory. Death changes our place of communion, but not those whom we have communion with.

Saints, on earth, live upon love-tokens from God and Christ, sent to them by the Spirit; but, in heaven, upon the original and fulness of all that love. Here, by the Spirit, we read the love and kindness of God and Christ in a covenant of free grace, and many gracious promises; but, in heaven, we taste of love in the fountain, in the very bosom of God and Christ, to all eternity. Here we glory, but that glory waits for us in heaven; there our glory is to be swallowed up into glory, and to be made glorious in the fulness of that glory. In this world saints glory over the nature of death; it doth not kill them, but change them from a cloudy world, to a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. As for the bodies of the saints, it may be said of them, as Christ did of the ruler's daughter, *She is not dead but sleepeth*. Death changes them in this, that their sleep is something longer than at other times, yet they are not dead but sleep; for Christ is the life of saints, and because Christ lives they live also: their clay is taken care of in their sleep; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortality must put on immortality; and then it will fully appear that death is swallowed up in victory. The nature of death is changed by Christ's taking away the sting; from being the king of terrors it becomes the messenger of glad tidings.

Death is now so free from terrors that it brings tidings of the greatest joy to saints; it tells the spouse of Christ, she shall go and be for ever in her beloved's arms. Your wilderness days are accomplished, in which you went many times to the watchmen, to enquire for your beloved; and you found them in the dark as well as yourself; but now you shall find your beloved, and be filled with his love, and live in the light of the Lord for ever. Death tells the children of God he is come to fetch them home, to their father's house, yea, to their father's kingdom, in which they shall all reign with him. They shall be as children under age no longer; they shall now possess the mansions prepared from eternity to eternity; not only have all tears wiped from their eyes, but to live for ever in the beholding and enjoying perfection of glory. Death brings glad tidings both to body and soul: it tells the body—head, you shall ach no more; stomach, you shall be sick no more; heart, you shall tremble and be afraid no more; flesh, you shall bleed and smart no more; I am come to put an end to all these fears and troubles. God will lock you up in the cabinet of the earth, that you may there sleep in peace, till Christ raise you incorruptible, and carry you into glory. And to the soul, death says, you shall have no more time for sin and

vanity ; perfect holiness to eternity shall now swallow you up ; I come only to put an end to sinning days ; you shall groan under sin no more : that body which held you, and was subject to temptations, shall now go to sleep in the dust, till the tempter be chained up in eternal darkness : instead of mourning under sin, you shall now and for ever glory over sin ; your fears shall end, and so shall your faith ; for instead of the evidence of things not seen, you shall both see and enjoy the heights, breadths, depths, and lengths of the love, grace, kindness, faithfulness, and glory of that God you have believed in. Fear not me, says death, I come from your father, so as you may be sure I have no commission to hurt you : Christ, your beloved husband, brother, head, and redeemer, took care that I should not be able to hurt you ; for he took my sting from me before he sent me to you ; I am come without a sting, to tell you God and Christ loves you ; but this is not all my errand, they love you so well, that they can suffer you no longer, to be out of the full enjoyment of their love, and I am sent to break down the clay walls which imprison you, that you may flee home, and be at rest : where no troubles can ever reach you, nor any power be able to hurt you.

This is the true nature of death to saints ;

Christ having taken sin from them, which is the sting of death; so that in all this, and much more, believing saints may glory in the very nature of death.

Secondly, A saint through Christ, may glory over death, in the time of it. A believing saint knows when ever death comes it shall be without a sting, and this made the apostle to glory, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* If death stay longer before it comes, yet I can glory in the length of time, *for to me to live is Christ;* and in the strength of Christ, I can wait patiently all the days of my appointed time until my change come. And if death be at hand, and settle itself in my bosom the next moment, yet herein I shall glory, *for to die is gain.*

A believing saint can tell death he hath his time as well as his work appointed him; you have both your time and your power given you by my father, and though to me it is a secret when your time shall be, yet by the grace of God, I am persuaded, that whenever you come the love of God, my father, comes with you; and your work shall be to have me home, that I may feed upon the banquets of love for ever. Therefore, says such a soul, I fear not the time of your coming, but wait patiently for it, according to the will of God; yet in all that time I know I

shall thirst earnestly to be dissolved and to be with Christ.

The uncertain time of death may be sad and amazingly dreadful to such as have their good things and their portion only in this world, and that only for the term of life: when death comes he seizeth all in a moment, and they are left empty; though their barns be full as the fool's in the gospel: but to such a soul, whose life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is its life shall appear, we shall then appear with him in glory. Here the uncertain time of death can be no disadvantage, because Christ to this soul is eternal life; so that it lives certainly and eternally with Christ in God. It hath a certain life and therefore can glory in it, and over the uncertain time of death. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—Death, I can glory in this, that Christ hath made thee my friend, by taking my sins, which was thy sting, away from thee; and now I long, and earnestly desire, to see thy face. O death! my friend, if I must wait yet a few days, or years, before the appointed time shall come for thee to lay my weary body asleep in the dust; yet I see the beauty of my Father's will in that; but if thou art at hand

thou art truly welcome ; for me it would be a blessed moment, as thou wilt introduce me into the full fruition of eternal glory ; this thy time is the time of wiping all tears from my eyes, and revealing all glory to my soul ; of putting an end to all misery, and the beginning of joys without end ; thy time is my triumphing, my waited, hoped, longed for moment. I told the world, that scorned me, that I was an heir of glory ; had mansions and a crown prepared and waited for me in my father's glory ; and thou art now come, O Death ! to fetch me home ; to bring me to Christ, my head, with whom I shall for ever possess that glorious inheritance which I have gloried in ; this is a blessed moment in which I behold thy face ; thou art not come before thou art welcome ; I have nothing to stay me here ; I have waited long for thee ; my God and Father is in heaven, and so is Christ my Beloved : there is perfection, purity and glory ; my treasure is there and so is my heart ; and thou art now come to set me free from this corrupt, empty, perishing world, that I may be there for ever. O, blessed be the Lord, that thou art come ; thy time is a welcome time, a time of deliverance from the body of sin ; thy stroke puts an end to all hours of temptation ; and though the men of the world may trample over my clay, yet my soul shall triumph in

real glory, which is above the imaginary glory of the worldling.—Thus may a believing soul glory over death in the time of it.

Thirdly, A believing saint through Christ may glory over the fears of death.

Whatever fears there are in death, they are only to Christless persons, for souls in Christ may glory over them all; because to them death hath no sting; and first the grand fear in death is this, that it may prove the eternal dragging of soul and body out of the world, to stand before the righteous Judge of quick and dead; where it shall receive this sentence, *Go ye cursed into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* for ever. This is more than a fear, for it is a reality to Christless souls, where death comes with his sting in him; but when the sting is gone this fear is gone also; and the believing soul in Christ, may glory over death, as it is bereaved of its sting. The scripture tells us, *It is appointed for all men once to die, but after death the judgment*; that is, to come before the righteous Judge: but the description which the word of God giveth us of that day is, that there shall be a right hand and a left, to distinguish between the sheep and the goats.—*Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*; so to the sheep, on his right hand, he will say, *Come*

ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The fear in death is a fear of judgment, but the judgment day is a blessed day to all the members of Christ; it is that day when soul and body shall meet again to be blessed for ever, by inheriting the kingdom prepared for them; it is the day of the bodies full redemption, and eternal nuptial with the soul: this day is far from administering fear in death to souls in Christ, yea, it is the comfort in which those earthly tabernacles go to the dust, believing that what is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; what is sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; and what is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; and though it be sown a natural body, yet it shall be raised a spiritual body. So then the fear of eternal death and judgment is taken away from this natural death, where Christ hath taken away the sting.

Secondly, The men of the world will tell you they are afraid of death, because it cuts them off their worldly delights; they can find no other fault with the world but that it perisheth; could they enjoy it for ever, though there are many briers in this wilderness, they would make their Canaan in it, so that they might never be stripped of it; but they know when death shall once close their eyes, they must bid

adieu to all their worldly delights, never to see or enjoy them more ; and upon this consideration, as well as the former, death is the king of terrors to them.—But it is quite contrary with a soul in Christ ; he concludes, if his hopes and comforts were only in this world he were of all men most miserable. He blesseth God for every mercy in the wilderness, but lives only in God himself : it is his joy to look upon the world as perishing, and his body decaying ; for the height of his glory, and the expectation of his soul, is to be dissolved and to be with Christ. He counts the worldlings choice of mirth to be the greatest misery. To be ever in the world would be worse than ten thousand thousand deaths to his body ; his pantings are to be absent from the body, that he may be fully present with the Lord. He acknowledges God to be glorious in his footstool, but as an heir of God, he thirsts to be in the glory of his throne. If you would tell him of pleasure and delight in the world, his answer is, that communion with God is full of permanent pleasure and delight. A gracious soul reckons all the delights and pleasures of the world to be among the wise man's vanities, and having tasted Christ, the Bread of Life, in his father's house, and in Him the love of his father's heart, he can neither feed upon, nor delight in the empty husks of this

perishing world. If an ambitious worldling tells him it is very good to be honourable, true, says he, if you mean that honour which floweth from being precious in the sight of God, and having an interest in his love. He gives this one answer to the worldlings, in all his proposals of pleasure and beauty in this life. God is the beauty of the whole creation, as the original fulness of it; so that it wholly depends upon his will; and that which is our glory is God himself, who is the glory of heaven and earth: though the world withers yet he is for ever glorious, and he is his people's glory. Therefore the worldling's fear in death upon this account is not a saint's fear; for his glory is not of the world but in God; and his delight and affections are on things above, not in things on the earth, because *He is risen in Christ*. His affections are risen before his body is dead; the delight of his heart is in heaven though the flesh of it be in his body. His soul is crucified with Christ to the world, and the world to him; so that neither his joys, nor his fears, are with the worldling. If death can only strip him of the world, he hath no cause to fear it; nay, death cometh too late for that, for he through Christ is dead to the world whilst he liveth; and is above all the fears of death, because *his life is hid with Christ in God*. The world-

ling says, " I am afraid of death, because it takes me from all my sweet relations here on earth ; I must die to them and they to me." But herein the believing soul is no loser ; he leaveth the drops of corrupted creatures love to be swallowed up into the ocean of God's eternal love ; he leaveth those broken cisterns of love, which in a little time would leave him, and is taken up into the Father, and fountain of love. He now comes to taste love in the original, and readeth it, as it was in the heart of God to him from eternity, and shall be to eternity in the fulness of God's love ; and so full that there will be no want of any good, or relations, for all will be made up in God. There will be no complaining in the streets of the new Jerusalem ; no want of relations : God will be a father ; Christ, a husband ; glorified saints, our brethren, sisters, and associates, to all eternity. We shall want no relations in heaven, nor shall any relations there want perfection ; for all there shall be compleat in Christ, and filled with the fulness of God : we leave a world of wants to possess a heaven of fulness and glory. But, says a tender-hearted father, or mother, " Will not my children, my little babes, want me ?"—No truly, for your work in the decree of heaven is done before God suffers death to cut your thread of life ; and it is our unbelief that

tells us, it were better either for us, or ours, that we had more work in the world than God hath appointed us : had we more days we could not in them make a hair black or white ; we could not of ourselves add that little to our little ones. Our heavenly Father's kindness will be our children's comfort ; and he liveth when we are dead to them and alive with him. The presence of God with our children will be their blessed portion, though we be absent : thus to believe in his love and faithfulness, will be a blessed rest to us and ours—we shall leave them well in leaving them with God ; and need not fear leaving them when we are going to God. Death in taking us from our children, and carrying us home to our father, will be an advantage to us, and no disadvantage to them ; for though he filleth us with all fulness of love and glory in heaven, yet he is nevertheless full, and can also fill our children on earth with every necessary good ; and such as taste of his love and grace, have no cause to doubt the freeness and fulness thereof. But, says the flesh, even of a saint, I am afraid of the pains of death in dying. Truly this is a fear of our own creating, for how many thousands go out of the world when standers-by can scarce tell whether they sleep or die?—But grant it, that the pains of death are strong upon thy flesh, yet

take this with thee, it is all the pains that ever thy flesh shall bear : men to live a dying life, are oftentimes content to have their limbs cut from their bodies, which I believe is far more painful to the body than when death cracks it to let out the soul, but the gain far exceeds ; thus the soul and body are both at ease, when the other is but the dying of one limb, a little before the rest of the body ; it is but the deferring of death, and it may be many deaths assault the body in that time ; this is but a bugbear in the fancy to affright children, not worth the naming among saints. Let God break what he will, when he will, and how he will, he makes all good again to his people in himself. It was Christ's end in taking the sting from death to leave no ground of fear for his people ; so that believing saints through Christ may truly glory in and over death in all the fears of it.

Fourthly, Believing saints, through Christ, may glory over death, in the manner of it.

Whether it be according to the terms we use for distinction, either a natural or violent death ; yet to a saint, through Christ, it is in both only death without a sting ; and that which our flesh calls the worst of these, is violent death. God hath and doth make this to be the portion of many of his dear saints : the prophets, all the apostles, and those glorious

primitive christians, or most of them, drank of this cup ; and did it with so much joy in God, that the tyrants of those times were unable to invent cruel deaths with that pleasure that they were to undergo them : the reason is visible ; for though these deaths had the cruelty of man in them, yet there was also the kindness of God in them. Christ had taken away the sting of death, which was sin ; and though men might add to their cruelty, yet they could put no sting into death. The martyrs of late times, as histories tell us, have gone leaping and rejoicing to the stake, being joyful in embracing the flames : and as one said to his fellow martyr, “ Be of good cheer, though our breakfast be sour, yet our supper will be sweet in heaven ; ” as if he had said, though these flames bring smarts with them, yet they will put an end to all future pains ; this is all the sting that is in death, and it will soon have an end. We shall sup with our beloved Jesus, and abide in that love for ever : it is sin in death that makes it bitter, whatever the manner be ; but if sin be taken away, there is no sting in death, let the manner of it be what it will ; it is all one to a saint where he meets with death, whether in the field or at home in his bed ; whether it takes him in his greatest strength, with his bones full of marrow, or in his decaying state, when

his eyes grow dim, and his other faculties fail; he minds not the manner of it, but the matter of it; death is without a sting: so that where, when, or how, death comes into his bosom, is of little value with him; he only minds this, to find in death a friend without its sting, and then, through Christ, he glories in and over the matter and manner of death.

Fifthly, A believing saint, through Christ, may glory over death in the ends of it.

There are two main ends in death, which are proper to saints. The first is, to put an end to a dying life, to finish that work which begins as soon as we begin to live, for so soon we begin to die: our whole life is but a progress of death; all the time we live we die invisible, and when we die it is but visible death; that which we carry about with us in the world, then appears to carry us out of the world; that which sleeps with us many a short sleep, now casteth us into one long sleep; this is properly the end of death in saints, to put an end to all dying; for it is a real truth, though a mystery to the world, that saints die whilst they live, and live when they die; so that this end of death is a saint's glory, not his grief, nor what he fears, but what he hopes for, counting himself the most miserable of all men, if the end of death were not to put an end to his dying life.

The other main end in death is, to pluck up the flowers of heaven that grows in the earth by the roots, that they may be planted in their own kingdom, and flourish there for ever. I mean the precious souls of saints, which are here enclosed in our earthly bodies, by which the beauty of those heavenly flowers are exceedingly short of that glory they shall have with Christ above, and do many times taste of the earth they grow in. Christ is the proper root of those branches, and heaven the only place for them to grow and flourish in. Now death comes only to transplant them from earth to heaven, to crumble that clay into dust which holds these flowers of heaven so fast, that they cannot get home into their own kingdom. Now a saint may well glory over this end of death, for death is herein the souls servant to have it home to glory, and to unprison it from all the bonds which now chain it down to earth.

Lastly, A believing saint through Christ may glory over death in its victory.

I mean the victory which saints have over death; death in the will of God lays them to sleep in their corruptible bodies; but saints, through their union with Christ, rise again in incorruption; though it goes to the dust corrupt and noisome clay, in dishonour and in weakness, like a natural body; yet Christ will raise

it again a spiritual body, full of power and glory. There is no loss to saints in dying, no not to their corruptible flesh; for that hath an interest in Christ; and Christ having conquered death for his people, though their bodies shall by death be sown in corruption, yet they shall not lie there for ever. The grave shall have no victory, but shall give up its dead; and such as rise in Christ shall rise as Christ, with spiritual bodies, though the earth shall have leave to rot the corruptible bodies of the saints, yet Christ will preserve his interest, and raise them as the fruit of his redemption and resurrection, even a spiritual body. Death hath its office, and the grave its proper work; but Christ hath the command of both; when death hath laid the bodies of the saints in the dust, there is the end of his office; and when the grave hath swallowed up the corruption of those bodies, then its work is done also: but then Christ hath an eternal work in his hands, to raise it to a spiritual body, that the fulness of his redemption may be made up, so as that soul and body both may be filled with the fulness of his redemption; and in this work, Christ commands both death and the grave to give up their dead bodies, and then he glorifies his own suitable to that eternal life which they are to possess. The scripture tells us, *That Christ*

is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. That is, Christ is first in the resurrection, so as he is the first fruits, a testimony to all that sleep. The apostle telleth us, *That the same power which raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.* I mention these scriptures to shew the victory that saints have over death and the grave; and with me, they have full satisfaction and ample proof in them to the thing in hand; that neither death can hurt, nor grave hold, so much as the body of a saint in Christ: but on the contrary, that the very bodies of saints have victory over death in dying; and that saints have exceeding cause to glory over death, under this consideration, as well as all or any of the former.

I shall next take into consideration, some of the benefits and advantages that believing saints, through Christ, have by death; both in our souls and bodies. I will begin with the bodies:

First, Death frees us from all the natural infirmities and diseases of our bodies.

One complains that wind makes a torturing

tumult all over his body; the bowels and the body are full; and they fill the head, so that there is no part free. Another complains, that a flux of water hath filled his veins, chilled his blood, and benumbed his joints. Another complains, that he is a martyr to the rheumatism or gout, so that aches are in all his bones. A fourth complains, that gravel lieth in his reins, tears his kidneys, and stops his bladder, and that his life is, upon the torturing rack. There are many more complainers besides these, which go from man to man to make their moan and beg help for a little ease; though but for a little time, which sometimes they find, but often return from fellow-creatures as miserable as they came. But, when death comes, without his sting, he makes a perfect cure of all sorrows and pains for ever. Among creatures we seek ease with tears, but death brings full and lasting ease, and wipes away all tears from our eyes: death puts an end to hunger and thirst, to cold and nakedness, to labour and weariness; in short, to all our wants, and to all our woes. The grave is quiet; it is the only piece of quiet earth that man can meet with; though a little above the grave on the earth there be cryings out and complainings, yet the grave is quiet; nothing can disturb the rest and quiet of that bed. It is not capable of disturbance; this, I assure you, is a greater

benefit than all the living world enjoys besides. Crowns have their crosses, states their cares, all persons and things their wants: every person, state, condition, and thing under the sun is wrapped in vanity. All wants are buried in the grave of death; the body of man never bids adieu to all want, till it be embraced in the arms of death, and laid to rest in that quiet centre of the earth; and when death comes without its sting, it brings this certain benefit and advantage with it.

A second advantage of the body of saints in death without its sting, is this, it takes us from the scorn and cruelty of the world. When the bodies of saints are in the grave, worldlings must seek some other object for their slander, scorn, or cruelty; they will find no sap or moisture in the dust of saints to feed these lusts upon. The derision and persecution of God's dear saints on earth, is the pastime and practice of sinning souls, like the fly that sports itself about the candle, until its wings are burnt; but God hath his time to ease his people of this burthen, and if not before, yet certainly and fully when death comes this work is effected. The wicked worldlings count a saint to be the only troubler of the people and place wherein he lives; but when death comes to a saint, he is very willing to leave the worldlings with their

portion; he is not desirous to trouble them any longer; all he desires is a little earth to lie down to sleep in, and that the world is content to grant, wishing that all the rest were there also: this is a benefit which a saint, with submission to the will of God, desires long before it comes; he is as willing to be at home in his own inheritance, as the men of the world are to have him out of theirs. Now death crowns these longings in some saints, and brings in the harvest of many prayers, which the Spirit hath made for this very thing; so that in these, and many more particulars, death is beneficial and advantageous to the body of saints. But I shall mention two particulars in which death, without its sting, is, through Christ, exceedingly advantageous to the souls of believing saints.

First, it delivers them from a body of sin, a place of temptation and darkness, which is the whole complaint of saints, while they are in the flesh. The apostle Paul complains of the law in his members, which rebelled against the law of his mind, and of the body of death. How often doth the prophet David pray to be kept from temptations, and to enlighten his darkness; that God would shew him the way he should walk in, and make his paths straight? Saints desire to be unclothed of the body of flesh, because they are capable of sinning in

that body; nay, it is a body which tempts to sin, and in which the soul is under much darkness, *and therefore groans within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.*

It is very comfortable to be delivered from temptations, that they get not the upper hand, so as to lead the soul captive at their will; but to be above the reach of all temptations, where we can never possibly be tempted more, how exceeding precious and glorious is this? A saint would, if it were in his power, give the whole world so that he might never sin more; it must then needs be of great advantage to him, to be carried above the reach of any temptation to sin. You will never meet a saint at the throne of grace, but his breathings are, “ Lord, enlighten me, in thy will; make thy mind clearer and clearer unto me, by thy Spirit; leave me not in the darkness of my own natural views”. How precious must it be to this soul to be taken out of natural darkness, and to be for ever with the Lord.

All this, and much more, are the advantages of saints in the death of their bodies; for this death without the sting of sin, is death to the body of sin, that it can be no more a body to sin; it separates light and darkness, the soul and body; that both might go to their proper place, and then the soul com-

plains no more of darkness. It is dark clay that hinders the soul's light; when it is quit of that it is perfect in light; and this makes saints so desirous to shake off the rags of this flesh: their clouds of darkness, their places of temptation, and their sinning bodies. Now, when death comes, he satisfies all these thirstings, fills up all these desires, and accomplisheth the present design of God concerning the fleshly body, in which the precious souls of believing saints, are through Christ, abundantly benefited. But this is not all the advantage which death, without its sting, bringeth to the souls of believers; the soul is now taken up into the perfection of God's eternal love, full of glory and everlasting purity; thus it is to be *for ever with the Lord*.

The bodies of saints must be sown in corruption, before they can rise in incorruption; and the soul is never perfect till it be quit of the corruptible body and this evil world; but this being once accomplished, then the soul is in God, and God in the soul makes up perfection to all eternity: the soul hath nothing to obstruct the full enjoyment of its master's joy. It is now a child of full age; nothing can hinder him in possessing his full inheritance in his father's love and glory. The mansions prepared from all eternity are now possessed to all eternity. The love which lay

hid in our father's heart, and was too great to be revealed in the world, is now spread open to the soul—*eat and drink* beloved soul; *O drink abundantly, and be satisfied*: this feast of love will hold out for ever; eternity cannot exhaust it. It is the love of God; this is the supper of the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world, in the design of God's free grace. This mystery is now revealed, and the souls of saints filled with the glory of it: saints in heaven are in the light of the Lord, and all filled with the Lord their light; perfection is there the portion of every soul. Christ hath given up the kingdom to his father; and God is the perfection and fulness of all his children; this perfection of glory is God's end, in redeeming his elect, that we might be heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ, in his eternal love—full glory, and everlasting purity; never to know sin or sorrow more; to be above the breathings of any defilement, or the buddings of any vanity; what we shall then possess will be God—it will be all God, and always God. God will be the light of our eyes; the life of our souls; the excellency of our glory; the sweet of our sweet; and the perfection of our purity, in heaven. Heaven is the presence of God; the full, perfect, glorious, and the eternal presence of God, will be our heaven when death hath laid our dying

bodies asleep. When the corruptible sleeps away its corruption, the incorruptible soul possesseth a crown incorruptible, and full of glory. Therefore the time of death, without its sting, is through Christ to a believer, of great advantage both to soul and body.

Saints in Christ ought to improve the joys, and consolations, which come from the free grace of God to their souls; amongst which I am sure this truth is very eminent, and therefore ought to be well improved. And

First, This calls upon believing saints, not to have sad or hard thoughts of death; we should not make fear in our flesh, or spirits, to be the associate of the thoughts of death; there is no cause for it, the sting being taken away. By this needless and unbelieving fear of death, in saints, we prejudice ourselves, and bring an evil report upon our friend. Sad and hard thoughts of death, I verily believe, do much prejudice the saints in their comforts, and walk, with God through this wilderness. It were happy if in reading we could read our own hearts, and God's mind and will in the promise, by faith.

Secondly, These fleshly fears of saints bring an evil report upon death, which through Christ, is our real friend.

It is very unbecoming saints to scandalize any; but that we should do this to death, who

is so real a friend to us, and the messenger of such glad tidings as beforementioned, is ungenerous. If saints look upon him with a fearful eye, he will then be taken for an enemy to all the world; for to others he cometh with his sting, so that they have just cause to fear; but to saints death is a reconciled friend in Christ; and we do him an injury when we look upon him in any other view; nay truly, we dishonour Christ to fear death after he hath conquered him.

The redemption of Christ for his people is so full, that they may and ought to serve him without fear: the victory over death is part of the redemption of Christ; so that now, fear of death is no less than diffidence of that redemption; saints should therefore be very watchful that they harbour no sad nor hard thoughts of death; because, in so doing, we dishonour a true friend, yea and Christ also, that made death thus to be our friend.

In the next place, this calls upon saints that when death comes to sit in our bosoms, we should bid him truly welcome, and give him the entertainment of a friend; that is, be truly joyful to see him. Let death find, by the joy of our hearts, that he is welcome to our bosoms; let his countenance be pleasing to us; for though he be pale death to our flesh, yet that flesh shall be a gainer by its

paleness, and find nothing in death but a quiet rest, till it shall put on incorruption. But to the spirit, death is a messenger from God, and Christ, of glad tidings; and the feet of those which bring glad tidings should be beautiful to us; let death when he comes find he is a long-looked-for friend; that he is not come before he is welcome, and would have been welcome if he had come much sooner; that thou takest him for a good and real friend; that thou art heartily willing to go with him, and to leave all thy friends in the flesh; that thou hast kept them company only till he come, and now are willing to leave them all to go with him.

Saints may well bid death welcome as a friend, for Christ is in him, and the love of Christ in his message. When Christ took sin from saints, which was the sting of death, he gave them love in the room of sin; so as before we had sin in all, now we have love in all; and though death to saints have not the sting of sin, yet it hath the love of Christ, and is worthy to be bid welcome, and entertained with gladness, when he cometh.

But again, this calleth aloud to saints that they believe strongly in the love of Christ, who hath taken away the sting of death, which is sin; and thereby made death, that was an original enemy, to be a true and constant

friend; the scripture telleth us, *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.* Now death, as an enemy to saints, is destroyed in the death of Christ; for his sting, which is his enmity, is taken away by Christ. What I infer is this, saints have much cause to believe in that love; the strength of which hath overcome all enemies for us. Christ hath overcome death, the last of enemies, why should we ever then fear the changing of that love, which hath left us no enemies to make us afraid. Saints fears are of their own creating; for whatever might have been a true cause of fear, hath been under Christ destroyed; for he hath destroyed all enemies, and where no enemy is, there is no ground of fear. What remains then? why nothing but a firm and lasting foundation of faith. The love of Christ is a strong foundation for a saint to believe in.

Saints have many that hate them, but none that can hurt them. Take this for proof: death is a saint's friend; there can be no greater testimony of love than the destroying of enemies; for no man will destroy the enemies of him that he is an enemy unto; enmity would make enemies; it is only love that destroys them; and this love is Christ to his people: his love is so great that he will leave us no enemy; that is, no person, persons, or

things, shall ever be able to destroy a saint : then surely saints may, and ought, to believe strongly in the love of Christ. Worldlings know their strength too weak to shake this eternal foundation. Through the love of Christ saints are conquerors over death ; saints may believe firmly on the love of Christ ; for a worse enemy than the world, even sin, shall never be able to destroy them ; for Christ hath destroyed sin, and in it death also, for all that believe in him.

Saints need not fear, they cannot lay more upon this love than Christ is able and willing to bear, nay than he hath borne already : for he hath borne all the transgressions, iniquities, sins, griefs, sorrows, stripes, and chastisements of his people. He hath redeemed them from the whole of sin, and believing saints may venture their souls, and all upon Christ ; for he hath put death to death, and overcome all enemies for them.

Again, saints should make this improvement of these truths—Patiently wait upon God.

Death will assuredly come and deliver them from all their troubles in the flesh. Faith made Job to wait patiently all the days of his appointed time till his change come. There is an appointed time in which the change shall come, and beyond that time it cannot stay.

There can be no loss of faith in this thing; for death waits upon our father's will, and shall certainly come at his appointed time. I confess it is hard for saints, that are heirs of heaven, and know it, willingly to stay longer out of heaven, and their father's embracings; and all that time to be in a body of sin, and a sinful world; to bear the infirmities of the body, with the scorns, slanders, and persecutions of the world. Yet remember, that this is the fulfilling the will of our God, and all this time death, our friend, is coming; every moment bringeth this longed-for blessing nearer and nearer; and we cannot tell but it may be at the door: that death may be in the next moment is the world's fear—let it be the saint's joy, and serve to quench immoderate thirst. Here is this to answer all fears, it will certainly come, and cannot be far off: Christ longeth more for us than we do, or can do, for him; and though we think him long, yet he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Remember the body is made of brittle earth; it will be soon cracked, or moulder away; it cannot by its constitution last long. The word of truth calleth him a fool that counted upon many years when he was in clay: the flower soon fadeth, the grass is soon withered; the shadow soon gone, and the weaver's shuttle passeth swift away.

Consider again, our waiting is but for a moment, compared with the time of enjoyment; the next moment may end one, but the other is eternal, without end; and the first entrance into our father's glory will take away the remembrance of all sorrows, and sufferings here below: nay the very beholding of death without his sting will make us amends for all our waiting. Now, surely saints have great reason to wait for God's time patiently and believingly; though we be at present in the wilderness, yet Canaan cannot be far off, and Christ will go with us through all the wilderness, till he brings us into Canaan. He is faithful which hath promised never to leave nor forsake his people; the waiting time shall not be wholly without him; but when that time is accomplished, then we shall be fully and for ever with him; therefore our waiting should be in faith and patience on the will of God, all the days of his appointed time for us.

Lastly, The whole life of saints should be a life of holy joy in God, and a glorying through Christ, over sin, death and the grave. Believing saints should live in view of those joys which accompany death without the sting of sin: they should glory in the grace of God, and the God of grace. Saints should glory in the redemption of God's free grace; and as

the apostle here makes a holy triumph over death, without its sting of sin, and over the grave, which hath no victory; but must give up those bodies which are sown in it in corruption, to be raised in incorruption. We should let the world know how kind a God we have; that will not leave any sting in death, or victory in the grave; but puts an end to sin, and thereby an end to all sorrow. Saints may well glory over death that have God and Christ for their life; saints may safely question about his sting; when Christ hath taken it away for us, we may safely glory in the time of death's approach, and the hour of his coming. When Christ hath taken away his sting from him, we may truly say, there is no God like our God, no beloved like our beloved: for none but such as have an interest in the love of God, and redemption of Christ, can glory over death; for to all others, death hath his sting, and when he cometh, it is to sting the soul to spiritual death. Where death comes with his sting, there is a thousand deaths in one; but to a saint, death is no death, only a change, or a dissolving to be with Christ.

Let us proclaim this blessed victory to the world, and so glory in our God; that they may know their perishing idols are no ways to be compared with our real interest in Christ.

The day of death that is at hand will fully prove the truth of this; therefore we may boldly say thus; we shall make it good both living and dying. The glory of a believing saint's death doth abundantly exceed a man of the world's life, nay indeed his own life, *for though to him it be Christ to live, yet it is gain to die.* It is more Christ to die than live; in life saints glory in Christ as he died for them; but in death they glory in Christ as they lived with him; the first is the glory of purchase, but the latter of possession. In the first, we glory that the inheritance is given, but in the latter that it is received, which maketh up perfection of glory. And to saints this is the next step to death, without its sting, so that they may herein glory, and triumph as the apostle, *O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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FINIS.



